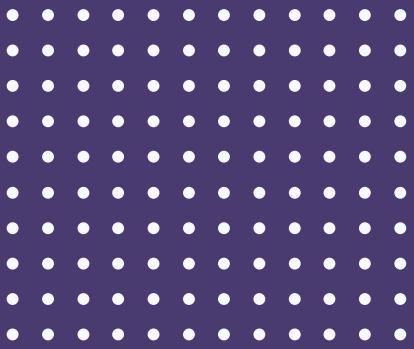

HSCred

HSCred

WHITE PAPER

#PassionForLearning

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Executive Summary

Grades got inflated so an A at one high school cannot compare to the same grade at any other. We lost trust in the SAT because it measures only a narrow band of ability. AP doesn't reach all schools, and even in schools that have it they don't offer all subjects. New York State is ditching Regents Exams, and the Supreme Court eliminated race-based admissions. Admissions officers have been going blind. Now AI has finished off their last view into the student mind, the college essay.

MIT got rid of the SAT only to reinstate it, desperate for any signal among the noise. It is not only the colleges. States like New York are phasing out tests in favor of portfolios, then finding they have no way to compare portfolios across high schools. The same blindness, top to bottom. The answer is HSCred: student work, validated by experts, at scale. A trusted source of hard-earned academic capital.

The Problem

A university admitting each new class must compare students. Grades have inflated for a decade, and an A grade means different things at different schools (ACT, 2022; Brookhart et al., 2016). The SAT was meant to be the equalizer, the one measure comparable everywhere, but it measures only a narrow band of ability, missing the creative and practical skills that also predict success (Sternberg & the Rainbow Project Collaborators, 2006), and it tracks family income as much as ability (Geiser & Santelices, 2007; Dixon-Román et al., 2013). Trust in it fell. Advanced Placement and the International Baccalaureate are rigorous, but few schools offer them across every subject, limiting their reach, since offering them widely takes resources and staffing that many schools lack (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2018; College Board, 2025).

That left the essay, the last direct look at how a student actually thinks, comparable nationwide. Then generative AI broke it. A student can now produce a clean, on-prompt essay in seconds, and no reader can tell who

wrote it, a practice admissions officers themselves distrust (Kaplan, 2025). Detection does not rescue it. The tools misjudge non-native writers, fail after light editing, and the most prominent was withdrawn by its own maker (Liang et al., 2023; Perkins et al., 2024; OpenAI, 2023). The last signal an office could trust was gone.

It happened at the worst possible moment. The Supreme Court had just ended race-conscious admissions (Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard, 2023), so the need to find talent fairly rose exactly as the means to measure it fell. And the offices were already overwhelmed. First-year applications passed ten million for the first time in 2024-25, with no matching rise in the people to read them (Common App, 2025), and admissions has turned to AI just to keep up (Knox, 2023), so that admissions AI now often reads work submitted by student AI. David Hawkins of the National Association for College Admission Counseling called it a "hard administrative wall," because "the volume of applications is so large at so many institutions that there simply isn't the people power or the time to implement something that is radically different from what we see now" (Hawkins, as cited in Guha et al., 2018). So whatever replaces the lost signal cannot ask the office to do more.

With no such option in hand, the field reaches for the only two moves it has left, and both are retreats. Bring the test back, or police the essay. Having dropped the SAT, selective colleges are now scrambling to restore it, MIT in 2022 and Dartmouth, Yale, Brown, and Harvard in 2024. Several conceded plainly that the test still tracks income, and brought it back anyway because they had nothing better (MIT Admissions, 2022; Dartmouth College, 2024; Yale University, 2024; Brown University, 2024; Harvard University, 2024). Policing the essay, trying to catch the AI after the fact, is a losing game, since work cannot be checked for honesty once it is handed in (Dawson, 2021; Dawson et al., 2024; Eaton, 2023).

New York is going blind too, and partly on purpose. The pandemic suspended the Regents exam and reopened the question of what it was for, and New York chose to move beyond it (New York State Education Department, 2024). So it is dismantling the one common measure it has had for comparing students across its schools, exactly when every other signal has gone unreliable. The

timing could hardly be worse. And yet the reasoning is sound. The Regents tested recall, and the state has set its sights higher, on a Portrait of a Graduate, the kind of thinking and creating a multiple-choice test was never built to capture (New York State Education Department, 2025a). If New York reaches that goal, public education in the state will be transformed. Otherwise it will retreat to the Regents, and performance-based assessment will remain an option only for select schools.

That is the gap HSCred fills. What the college and the state need is a trustworthy record of what students can actually do, one any institution can use to compare students fairly. It cannot be a signal judged honest after the fact, because authenticity can only be built into the work as it is made. And it has to arrive ready to use, evaluated before it reaches the institution, because no one has time to score student projects. The final judgment, to assign values allowing a comparison of one student with another, stays with the institutional user, made only at the moment it actually compares them.

For such a record to earn everyone's trust, it has to offer three things: real work, validated by experts, at scale. At scale is the hard part, and it suggests network effects, since students will go where the colleges are, and colleges will go where the students are. The first record to earn that trust becomes the one everyone relies on. A common high school transcript that belongs to the student rather than their school.

HSCred: Real work. Validated by experts. At scale.

The HSCred platform turns students' best academic work into verified portfolios for college admissions. A student first studies a unit, masters the content, then makes a deep dive video, ten minutes or less. It can be as plain as reading a research paper to the camera, or as produced as an edited engineer's journal kept during a robotics competition. Three experts who do not know the student review it, and if it meets criteria, it is published, the way a paper is published in a journal. Students today have the tools and experience to produce video the way a prior generation produced PowerPoint slides. Because submissions are in video form, they travel digitally, and how long it

takes to review and score is set by the length of the student's video defense, capped at ten minutes.

This is not a new idea. It is how universities already judge their own in academic journals. A professor earns standing by publishing work that other experts review. A student now earns it the same way, by publishing academic video. Publication has always been how academic capital is earned.

The work is organized into channels, like on YouTube. A professor launches each channel, sets its criteria, and chooses its reviewers. None of this is new to them. Editing a journal and refereeing for one are ordinary scholarly work, done by professors without a dean's approval. A channel is the same undertaking, so any professor can open one in their field, as long as they have standing as a university professor. That is the advantage of taking the model from the academy itself: the scholars who would run it already do this, all the time. The professor and the experts each earn an attractive hourly rate for their efforts. There are many channels, and each university decides which ones to trust. They score a channel once, and that weight is then built into their sorting algorithm whenever an applicant submits work on it. **Work competes to be published, and channels compete to be trusted.**

The transcript of up to ten published projects belongs to the student, not any one school. A student in rural Mississippi holds the same record validated by the same experts as a student at a private school on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. And a college receives the work itself, already scored, sorted by an algorithm only it controls. In fact, every institutional user can set up their own sorting algorithm, so there may be a different one for each admissions officer within the same university team.

How It Works

For publishing to replace testing, student work must be worth publishing. A student must first master the foundational content. Once they pass the entry test, or teacher interview, or however the channel evaluates content mastery, only then can their deeper learning begin. A machine can pass a test, so

recall is no longer the proof of what a student can do. The proof is the deeper dive that comes after the broad content of a learning unit is mastered.

To get there, a student publishes work in three steps, or certifies that these three steps were followed if publishing work retroactively.

1. **STAKE content.** First the student shows they have mastered the content. A Guide checks it and approves with a quiz, a test, or a review of note cards. A Guide is an educator at the student's own school, usually their classroom teacher.
2. **PITCH project.** Students who pass the STAKE assessment move on to build a project plan and set dates for feedback and revision. After several such cycles, when the student's work meets the channel criteria, it is given a title and an abstract, and the video presentation is ready for final upload.
3. **MINT academic capital.** The Guide certifies the work is the student's own. Three experts who do not know the student then review the presentation against the channel's rubric. The median of their scores determines whether a project is published.

This is a strengths-based approach to assessment, since unpublished work does not appear and work can always be revised. The limitation is that each student can publish only ten projects per transcript, and never more than one per month, so failing to get published costs a student time as they revise and resubmit for a later month.

> *Take any unit of learning. It used to end with a cram for the final, where most of the effort went. With HSCred's publication tools, the cram now comes first. The opening days of the unit are what they always were,*

direct instruction, flashcards, practice problems, until a student has mastered the content. But they are in a hurry to cram for the evaluation so that they can get on to the deeper learning project. The exam they cram for at the start of learning is the STAKE. Students hurry through it, because on the other side is the part they want: scripting, recording, producing. The ones who finish the STAKE move on to the PITCH, while others keep practicing to pass that STAKE assessment. Imagine starting a unit with the cram, and only beginning to learn after passing the quiz.

The Guide is the only person in the process who knows the student. That is deliberate. The experts score student work blind, knowing nothing about the student beyond the presentation video and the fact-checking documentation within the STAKE and PITCH submissions.

Publishing is permanent. Once three experts approve a project, it stays on the record for good, which is the honor of it, since it cleared the bar. A student does not choose who may see the work. What they control is how much of their own identity travels with it, and whether it is featured beyond the platform, on pages open to anyone.

As an example, a student in the South Bronx spends three weeks on the economics of food deserts in her neighborhood. She maps the grocery stores, interviews two bodega owners, and reads what economists have written. She masters that first. That is her STAKE. Then she makes her video, ten minutes explaining what she found, in her own words, with her own map on the screen. Her teacher watches her revise it twice and signs that the work is hers. Three experts she has never met review it, and it is published. It lands on her transcript with a score and a link. When she applies to college, the admissions officer does not read a word about her. They watch her think.

Reading the Record

SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

Scan or Click QR to View

NAME: Nyah Jhonnson
CEEB Code: 334021
DOB: 11/22/03
SCHOOL NAME: Central Harlem High School

OVERVIEW

What excites me most about learning is connecting ideas across fields: my robotics journal explores the intersection of technology and human creativity, while my climate migration podcast examines how environmental science shapes social policy. From synthesizing aspirin in a virtual lab to creating stop-motion films that explore scientific concepts, I'm driven by curiosity about how systems work, whether they're algorithms, ecosystems, or societies. I'm passionate about using research and storytelling to tackle complex challenges, always asking not just 'what' but 'why' and 'what if.'

	DATE	TITLE	SCORE	CODE
1.	09/26/24	Aspirin Synthesis Lab Video	1.0	FRAD0002
2.	10/24/24	Wave-Particle Duality Demo	1.0	GRBC0011
3.	11/20/24	Coral Bleaching Lab Study	1.0	ETHC0019
4.	12/18/24	Air Traffic Trigonometry	1.0	EXCL0011
5.	01/22/25	AI Bias Detection Algorithm	1.6	DAMT0012
6.	02/26/25	Robotics Build Journal	1.0	FRST0023
7.	03/26/25	Hamlet's Mental Health Analysis	1.4	BRGY0003
8.	04/30/25	Suffrage Movement Documentary	1.0	SPTC0007
9.	05/28/25	Climate Migration Podcast	1.0	RVNL0009
10.	06/25/25	Stop Motion Animation Film	1.2	HOBC0006

HSCred 11/15/25 10:14AM

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CHANNEL KEY

Sample Transcript · Nyah Jhonnson · page 2

CODE	EDITOR	CHANNEL	DEPARTMENT	UNIVERSITY
FRAD0002	Dr. Elena Marsh	Chemistry Foundations	Chemistry	Westbrook University
GRBC0011	Dr. Daniel Okafor	Modern Physics	Physics	Caldwell University
ETHC0019	Dr. Priya Nair	Marine Science Review	Marine Biology	Lakemont University
EXCL0011	Dr. Marcus Feld	Applied Mathematics	Mathematics	Hartley College
DAMT0012	Dr. Aisha Rahman	Algorithms & Society	Computer Science	Brennan Polytechnic
FRST0023	Dr. Thomas Vance	Robotics & Design	Robotics Engineering	Ashford University
BRGY0003	Dr. Sofia Bellini	The Close Reading	English Literature	Merritt University
SPTC0007	Dr. James Whitfield	U.S. History Review	History	Stonehaven University
RVNL0009	Dr. Hannah Reyes	Climate & Society	Environmental Studies	Easton College
HOBC0006	Dr. Leo Nakamura	Screen & Story	Film & Media Arts	Fairmont University

A student's transcript opens with a short overview in their own voice, then lists their published work, up to ten validated presentation videos with supporting documentation. An entry shows the date, the title, the score, and a code.

The score runs from 1.0 to 2.0. Nothing below 1.0 is published, so every entry already cleared the bar. A 1.0 met the channel's criteria. A 2.0 in any criterion means the student went "above and beyond" on that indicator. Most work sits between. Because only published work appears, and three experts set each score after the teacher verifies the student did the work, the number is one you can rely on.

The code names the channel. Its first characters identify the university and the professor who runs it, and a key on the back of the transcript spells them out. The experts who do the scoring stay anonymous, which is what keeps their review blind and independent.

This is more than a transcript of published projects. Scan the QR code at the top, or click any entry online, and the student's presentation opens. You watch the student present and defend the work on video, then go beneath the video to the sources they cite as evidence. An admissions officer can generate sorted lists of students by academic and demographic preference, then look as far down as they like, from watching the presentation to auditing the details that went into producing it.

A transcript of grades is an unverifiable claim. This transcript is a claim with the evidence attached, a record that scales like a test score and audits like a portfolio.

The Intelligence

As more and more students get work published on HSCred, a database of student transcripts emerges, each holding published projects validated by experts. What would an admissions officer's world look like with such a data instrument?

No more recruiting students to apply and reading college essays. She is not facing forty thousand applications she cannot finish, guessing at grades from schools she has never heard of, paying to recruit students she has no fair way to compare. The body of work that students built is simply there in front of her, all the scoring already done. Now she just has to decide how to sort the students to determine which are the best fit for her institution.

She weights the channels she trusts, from zero to ten. As each admissions officer adds these weights, trust metrics emerge that help students choose which channels are most trusted by the colleges they care about. She sets academic priorities with channel weights, then adds the non-race demographic filters that matter for the class she is building. The instrument ranks every transcript by her settings, a list that is hers and no one else's. She nudges a weight and watches the list reorder. She sets the number she has to give, the offers, the interview seats, the invitations to a campus event, and the list fills it. With a click, her invitation is sent to the students.

That was all point-and-click to set up her own sorting algorithm. Now she checks her own work. She opens the profiles for students at the top of her list and clicks a project to see one student's chemistry presentation. She plays the history documentary of another. In a few minutes she has met her top students through their own polished work. The depth is there when she wants it, and out of her way when she is faced with 50,000 students to sort. Students are never flattened into one number until this moment, by the preferences of an individual admissions officer. The record stays whole until she decides what to weigh.

She is no longer waiting for students to find her. She can reach out first, to a student whose work is exactly what her program lacks, and invite her to apply, to visit, to learn more about the institution. The recruiting that used to be a blind and costly guess becomes a search with the answer already on the screen. When the committee meets to weigh its recommendations, the officer can play clips to justify her selections. The students make their own case, in their own voices, on the screen.

Her counterpart at a state or a district opens the same instrument to compare schools instead of students. Perhaps this is a New York State superintendent. They can see a map of their district, showing what work is getting published from which campus, in which subjects. They watch the Portrait the state adopted take hold in the work itself, school by school and subject by subject. Which schools are publishing work by students with court-involved parents? Click and view. Foster-care-involved youth? That is a demographic too. The platform offers over eighty such student demographics, none race-based, so officials can study the populations they serve in detail.

This is what high-resolution academic intelligence means. Not another cold number, but a living instrument each institution tunes to its own needs and can always check against the work. And it pulls the whole system the right way: when what gets a student seen is real, defended work, schools stop teaching to a test and start helping students make work worth publishing.

A high school principal receives a deck of fifty access codes to get student work published. This is their chance to show off the best the school has to offer and to lift their strongest students in front of a national audience of admissions officers. This is a strengths-based way to evaluate schools as much as students. Principals are charged with finding what to celebrate, not only with managing what is broken. Maybe it starts with an after-school club doing strong project-based work. That work gets seen and celebrated, and students get credit for what would never have appeared on a transcript before, the robotics club or the statistical analysis for a sports team.

Built to Be Trusted

A new measure has to earn trust before anyone will use it. The foundation here is human. Every published piece on HSCred has cleared two kinds of review before it appears searchable for any institution. A licensed pedagogue, the student's Guide, took the student through cycles of feedback and revision, then certified that the work is the student's own. No one is better placed to know a student did their own work than the teacher who guided them through it. Then three independent experts, chosen by a university professor and highly paid for their time, judged the work for academic rigor, blind, never knowing whose it was. The teacher vouches for the authorship. The experts vouch for the academic rigor. And if you don't believe them, you can click and view the quality for yourself. That proof-of-work transparency is the foundation of the trust, and it is also what gives students an authentic audience for their work.

There is a name for why this beats a grade or an essay. Assessment researchers Fawns, Boud, and Dawson (2026) describe four kinds of evidence that a student has learned: the product they made, the process they followed to make it, the performance in which they show what they can do, and the practice they build over time. A grade rests on one of these, the product, and a written product is just what AI can now counterfeit. HSCred captures all four. The published work is the product. The supervised mastery and the revision cycles are the process. The recorded defense is the performance. The

transcript of up to ten projects, built one month at a time, is the scholarly practice. The signal holds where a grade or an essay cannot, because four kinds of evidence stand behind it instead of one.

On top of that foundation, and like any platform, the software gathers metadata to raise trust further. You never have to take a score on faith. The recording is one click away, and the editor who published it is named, traceable from the code on the transcript. As each admissions officer scores channels, they add their endorsement and build trust further. A professor at Brooklyn College can become a favorite of Harvard's admissions office, based on the work they publish and their practices for inter-rater reliability and ongoing training. The university name is not enough. Each channel is evaluated independently, and each admissions officer is looking for the best channels to endorse so they recruit the best students possible. A number you can check for yourself, backed by a name you can hold to account, evaluated by college admissions officers and superintendents nationwide, is a different kind of number.

The people are real people, not AI. A Guide registers with an email from a verified secondary school, so the teacher who certifies the work is who they say they are. A Channel Editor registers with a university address. There are no anonymous accounts on HSCred. The three experts who score a project are the one deliberate exception: they are verified and chosen by the editor, but they review blind and stay anonymous to the outside, so no applicant, parent, or rival can lean on them. The editor is the public face of the channel; the reviewers are shielded on purpose.

The cadence resists a last-minute rush. A student can publish at most one project per calendar month: work is due on the last day of the month, and the score is posted a month later, on the 1st. No student can save up projects and rush them out all at once in the months before applications are due. That kind of cramming is where cheating and shortcuts live, work thrown together at the last second to pad a record, and a one-a-month limit makes it impossible. The slow, deliberate pace is itself a guard on the work, one more reason the record can be trusted. This is not a popularity contest like social media; it is a deliberative academic vetting process.

The scoring resists a bad call. Three experts score each project independently and blind. The platform takes the median of the three, not the average, so a single harsh or generous reading cannot move the result. An average lets one extreme score drag the number up or down; the median sets that outlier aside and reports the middle judgment. The platform also watches the reviewers over time. One who drifts, always stricter or softer than the colleagues they are paired with, is flagged automatically for the editor to retrain, and, if they do not come back into line, removed. Because the work is paid, staying calibrated is in the reviewer's own interest, which lifts inter-rater reliability.

The rubric rewards thinking, not polish, because channels that allow fluff will lose trust and stop attracting submissions. Trust is earned in the open here, and it compounds. An admissions office decides which channels it trusts and weights them accordingly. A channel that judges well earns that weight, and the students who want to be seen publish to it. A channel that rewards polish over substance loses the trust, then the students, then the experts it pays. Work competes to be published, and channels compete to be trusted, so reliability is pushed up rather than left to drift.

Advanced Placement already earns its credibility this way: trained graders, shared rubrics, calibration, practice. HSCred keeps every one of those. The difference is what AP hides and HSCred shows. AP reports a score and keeps the work out of view. HSCred shows the work, opens the door to any student in any school, and lets any professor define what is worth publishing.

Built to Scale

Evaluation by experts sounds like it cannot reach the size of a real applicant pool, and like it leans on faculty who are already stretched thin. That would be true if a partner institution's own faculty had to do the work. They do not. Evaluation is paid work, done by a distributed network of experts. If an editor has no experts to recommend, the platform provides them, since there are always adjunct professors looking for extra income. A college that adopts HSCred adds no reviewers and reads no extra files. The work arrives already

judged. In fact, as offices learn to use the instrument, they reduce costs and raise the quality of their incoming class.

An expert evaluator earns $25 for each project they score. The videos are ten minutes or less, and many are shorter, so a reviewer scores at least six in an hour. That is $150 an hour. One hour each weekday comes to about $39,000 a year, for work done from anywhere, on the reviewer's own schedule. For an adjunct professor, or a teacher who wants to keep teaching rather than move into administration, that is a real wage for real expertise. The task is familiar. Scoring a short, focused project against a clear rubric is what a professor does at a poster session, on a scholarship review board, or judging live presentations at a science fair.

The same numbers answer the volume question. Six an hour, an hour a weekday, is about 1,560 projects a year from one evaluator. Each project is scored by three. So a single three-person panel clears about 1,560 published projects a year, roughly 130 a month, with just one hour per weekday from each reviewer. A channel runs as many panels as it needs. A small, part-time network absorbs the volume of a large institution, because each project is capped at ten minutes and the load spreads across many hands.

Supply grows with demand. When a channel's projects outpace its panel, the next reviewers are already in view. They are the Guides who have mentored students in that same channel and built a scoring record there. The platform compares each Guide's scores against the experts' median over time, and can see who judges well. A Guide who judges well can be invited to become a paid reviewer at the same rate, with one rule: a reviewer never scores a student from their own school, or a student they know, so review stays blind and independent. If a channel still cannot find enough reviewers, the platform supplies them. Grading is guaranteed, because it is easy to find academics when you pay them $150 an hour for their expertise.

One person keeps each panel on time. The Channel Editor earns a fee for every project the channel evaluates, without doing any evaluation themselves, in return for overseeing the panel and making sure the scores come back on schedule. The reviewers are paid to judge well. The editor is

paid to keep the channel moving, replace missing experts, and handle training needs.

Adoption scales the same way, from the bottom up. The platform does not have to sell its way into colleges one office at a time, because students carry it there. A student publishes work and drops a link to their transcript into a college application. The officer opens it to see what kind of transcript this is, and finds something they have never seen before: a high school student with published, expert-reviewed work. They click and watch the work. They click again and find thousands more students like this one, already validated, waiting to be found. The first one arrived free, carried in by an application. The rest cost a few dollars each to search, pennies against what recruiting costs now. By one widely cited industry benchmark, a private college spends about $2,800 to recruit and enroll a single undergraduate (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2022), much of it spent courting students it cannot yet judge. Here the students are already validated, and the quality is settled before the first dollar is spent.

Schools come aboard the same way, pulled by their own students. Any student can create a referral code to hand to their principal. If the school has never used HSCred, that code gives it one hundred free project evaluations, about $10,000 of value, to hand out for work worth publishing. The first student to bring their school aboard and help publish those first hundred projects earns a "school leader" badge on their own transcript. Once its students begin getting published, the school has every reason to purchase more access codes and to build the on-ramp for video production into its classrooms.

Who pays. Students never do. Students build the asset, schools fund the reviews, and institutions pay to search it. A student's account is free for life since they invest sweat equity to upload brilliant work. Schools and districts fund publishing through Access Card Decks, $5,000 for fifty expert evaluations, or $100 per project. The first 100 evaluations at any high school are free, a $10k value. Institutions that want to search and sort by student, school, district or otherwise subscribe, from $12,000 a year for a local pool of a thousand transcripts to roughly $50,000 a year at national scale.

This is what at scale means here. Not a pilot that works for one school and

breaks at a thousand, but a system that expands on both sides: a paid, distributed network that grows as fast as the work does, and a student-carried path that reaches a new institution with every record shared.

Journalism as the On-Ramp

When the reward changes from a test score to published work, classrooms follow. But a school cannot remake every subject at once. It needs somewhere to start, and the natural place is journalism.

Journalism is the on-ramp to performance-based assessment at scale because it carries, in the most familiar form, the three things the platform rewards. First, journalism is project-based. A student picks a question, does the work, and makes something, the same shape as a science investigation or a studio art piece. There is nothing exotic in it. It is project-based learning under a name everyone already knows.

Second, it is written for an audience rather than for one teacher who may never read it. A worksheet is written for the gradebook and thrown away. A journalistic article is written for readers, and that changes the work: it has to be clear, it has to be true, it has to be worth someone's time. And human beings always care about looking good in front of family, peers, and the public, not to mention college admissions staff. A real audience imposes a discipline a grade never can (Magnifico, 2010), and it is the same discipline the platform is built to reward.

Finally, the third thing journalism offers: the work can get published. Publication is not a flourish here; it is the whole idea. A portfolio is simply a student's public work, the pieces good enough to put their name on and let others see. Journalism is publication by nature, so a student who reports and publishes is already doing, in miniature, what this new academic record asks of them. With those skills in hand, the leap to "reporting" with evidence on what they are learning in chemistry class is a change of topic more than a change of skill.

Project-based, written for an audience, made public. Those three are the on-ramp, and journalism is where they are easiest to begin. Once a school builds the habit, it spreads across the curriculum. A science class publishes an investigation. A history class publishes a documentary. A math class publishes an explanation like those on Khan Academy, but this time by fellow students. Any subject can apply a journalistic lens to publish work to the student's record on HSCred.

There is an equity turn here worth naming plainly. Well-resourced schools already treat students as producers, people who make things for an audience. Too many other schools treat them as consumers, people who receive and repeat, and AI widens that gap. Youth media closes it by putting every student on the producing side, offering any student access to the kind of transcript once available only at elite private schools. In New York, the Youth Journalism Coalition is building this on-ramp school by school, under the banner of Journalism For All (J4A).

The Evidence

Start with what counts as valid evidence that a student has learned. A current framework from assessment researchers Fawns, Boud, and Dawson (2026) holds that no single artifact is enough: strong evidence combines four proxies, the product, the process, the performance, and the practice. A grade or an essay rests on the product alone, the one proxy AI can now fake. HSCred captures all four, as Built to Be Trusted describes, which is what lets its record carry weight a grade cannot.

The research behind the rest of the case comes in two kinds, and they should not be mixed. One concerns whether authentic, expert-reviewed work can be scored reliably and can predict what colleges care about. That is the admissions argument, and it stands on high school and college research. The other concerns whether learning this way produces durable understanding. That is illustrative, the reason the on-ramp works, not a claim about admissions. The first set carries the weight. The second explains why students learn. Full citations live in the HSCred Research Brief and the HSCred

Annotated Bibliography, available at hscred.com. This paper points back to them and introduces no new source.

Admissions-predictive (high school and college)

Finding	Source	Why it matters
Performance-based assessment runs at scale and predicts college readiness and persistence, including for historically underserved students.	Fine and Pryiomka (2020)	This kind of evidence works at scale and predicts, in real schools, today.
A record of real high school work predicts college success at least as well as tests, more equitably.	Geiser and Santelices (2007)	Authentic work adds signal beyond an income-linked test.
Clear rubrics with rater training produce reliable scoring across independent raters.	Jonsson and Svingby (2007); Reddy and Andrade (2010)	Blind, rubric-based review can be consistent.
Early portfolio programs scored unreliably without rubrics, training, and moderation.	Koretz et al. (1994), Vermont	The honest limitation, and why HSCred uses a blind median, calibration, and monitoring.

Instructional (illustrative only)

Finding	Source	Why it matters
Retrieving and applying knowledge produces durable learning.	Roediger and Karpicke (2006)	Why the test comes first, then the deeper dive.
Mastering the foundation before moving on raises achievement.	Bloom (1968); Kulik et al. (1990)	STAKE before PITCH.
Students learn more when they explain and produce.	Fiorella and Mayer (2016); Bisra et al. (2018)	Why making and defending the work teaches.
Project-based learning improves outcomes across subjects.	Chen and Yang (2019); Zhang and Ma (2023)	The project model, across K-12.
Guidance and foundational mastery should precede independent work.	Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark (2006); Tricot and Sweller (2014)	Mastery first, not a way around rigor.

Portrait of a Graduate

A growing number of states have described in detail what they want for their high school graduates. It is a first-principles exercise, asking at a statewide level: what is education for? In New York State, they call it a Portrait of a Graduate (New York State Education Department, 2025a). As you might imagine, many of the lists are similar: a young person who can think critically, investigate, create, communicate, and work with others (New York State Education Department, 2025c).

The trouble is that a Portrait is easy to declare and hard to see. None of these capacities show up on a multiple-choice exam. A state can put "critical thinker" and "effective communicator" on a poster, but it has had no way to know whether a given student, or a given school, is actually getting there.

A published project shows exactly these capacities. A student who investigates a question, builds something from it, and defends it on camera is thinking, creating, and communicating, on the record, where anyone can watch. The Portrait stops being a list of aspirations and becomes something you can see in a student's own work.

This is also where the institution's instrument and the state's goals meet. The same weights an office sets in the sort can be set to the attributes a Portrait names, so a state can finally watch its Portrait take hold, school by school, in the work students actually produce. Read across every district, that work becomes a single comparable record of the Portrait in action, the same in every school and legible to every college. If New York State engages professors at SUNY, and New York City does the same at CUNY, they can launch channels with rubrics aligned to their Portrait of a Graduate, and individual school districts can endorse those channels for their students to prioritize. They can also select channels run by out-of-state professors whose criteria align with one or more of their competencies. Students in any district can then filter the available channels by the ones their district endorses and by the university they hope to attend. That way, a student who gets published to one of these channels knows it will count toward graduation in their local district and rank them highly with their university of choice (New York State Education Department, 2025b).

Privacy

Student privacy has been a devastating issue in education technology. Because of our commitment to it, HSCred never shows ads or sells data to advertisers or data brokers. The only institutions that can pay to access our records are those with something to offer the students who come to publish their work: universities, scholarship foundations, and school districts.

The best way to protect student data is never to collect it. A student can earn a full transcript without giving up a single personal detail. The work is what is evaluated; identity is not required to publish. A student can be known entirely by what they have made.

Disclosure is staged, reversible, and always the student's move. A student can publish with nothing attached, found only through the work itself. They can add demographic details later, as few or as many as they choose, to help them be discovered in an institution's demographic sort. They add their name and contact last of all, when an institution they want to hear from reaches out. Each disclosure step is the student's, and each can be undone.

Personally identifiable information, when collected, is stored in a separate system from the academic work and grading data, and it is released only when a student wants to be matched with an opportunity and needs to identify themselves to do so. Many students say their names or show their faces in their videos, like any journalist, but they have the option not to. They can stay behind the camera, documentary style, recording audio only, doing research and showing relevant images without showing their face or disclosing their name. The result is a record that can only help a student and cannot be turned against them.

Conclusion

HSCred provides the solution universities and school districts need so that they can adopt performance-based admissions instead of reverting to SAT scores. The signals an institution once used to see a student have failed, and the volume of applications has only grown. The answer is not more testing or greater policing of essay writing but a record of real work, validated by experts, that any institution can read and weight for itself, with the number computed last, by the reader.

Build that record and the rest follows. Students are seen for what they can do, not for the name of their school. Colleges, states, districts, and foundations get high-resolution academic intelligence in place of a coin flip. And

classrooms turn from being focused on preparing for a test toward producing meaningful student work that is worth publishing.

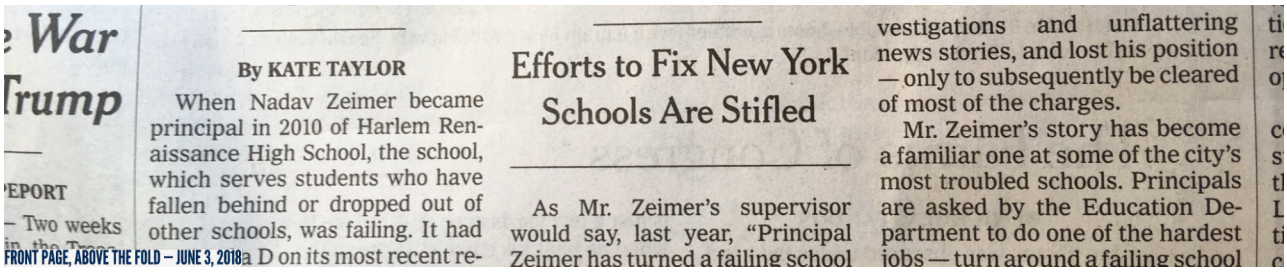
The talent was always there. HSCred is how institutions finally see it. ***Real work. Validated by experts. At scale.***

About the Founder and HSCred, Inc.

HSCred was built by Nadav Zeimer, known to his students in Central Harlem as Principal Z. He came to education from technology. In the late 1990s he helped build one of the first platforms for everyday audio creation, before the word podcast existed, and took two lessons from it that shaped this work: a platform helps people when it makes them creators rather than consumers, and you understand any platform by following the money to see whom it serves.

He taught physics and ran a portfolio-based, media-driven classroom, then became a turnaround principal at Harlem Renaissance High School, in the building where James Baldwin once dreamed of his future. The results reached the front page of the New York Times. What he kept seeing was the same waste: brilliant students overlooked because their schools lacked the reputation to vouch for them, and no reliable way to put their real work in front of the colleges that should have wanted them. In 2025 he founded HSCred to fix this at scale.

The design follows one rule: ask nothing of teachers beyond the project-based work they already do, so they spend less time on paperwork and more time as guides. HSCred commercializes technology developed at the nonprofit Academic Capital Foundation and returns a share of its profits to it.



e War
Trump

EPORT
– Two weeks

By KATE TAYLOR

When Nadav Zeimer became principal in 2010 of Harlem Renaissance High School, the school, which serves students who have fallen behind or dropped out of other schools, was failing. It had a D on its most recent re-

Efforts to Fix New York Schools Are Stifled

As Mr. Zeimer's supervisor would say, last year, "Principal Zeimer has turned a failing school

vestigations and unflattering news stories, and lost his position — only to subsequently be cleared of most of the charges.

Mr. Zeimer's story has become a familiar one at some of the city's most troubled schools. Principals are asked by the Education Department to do one of the hardest jobs — turn around a failing school

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